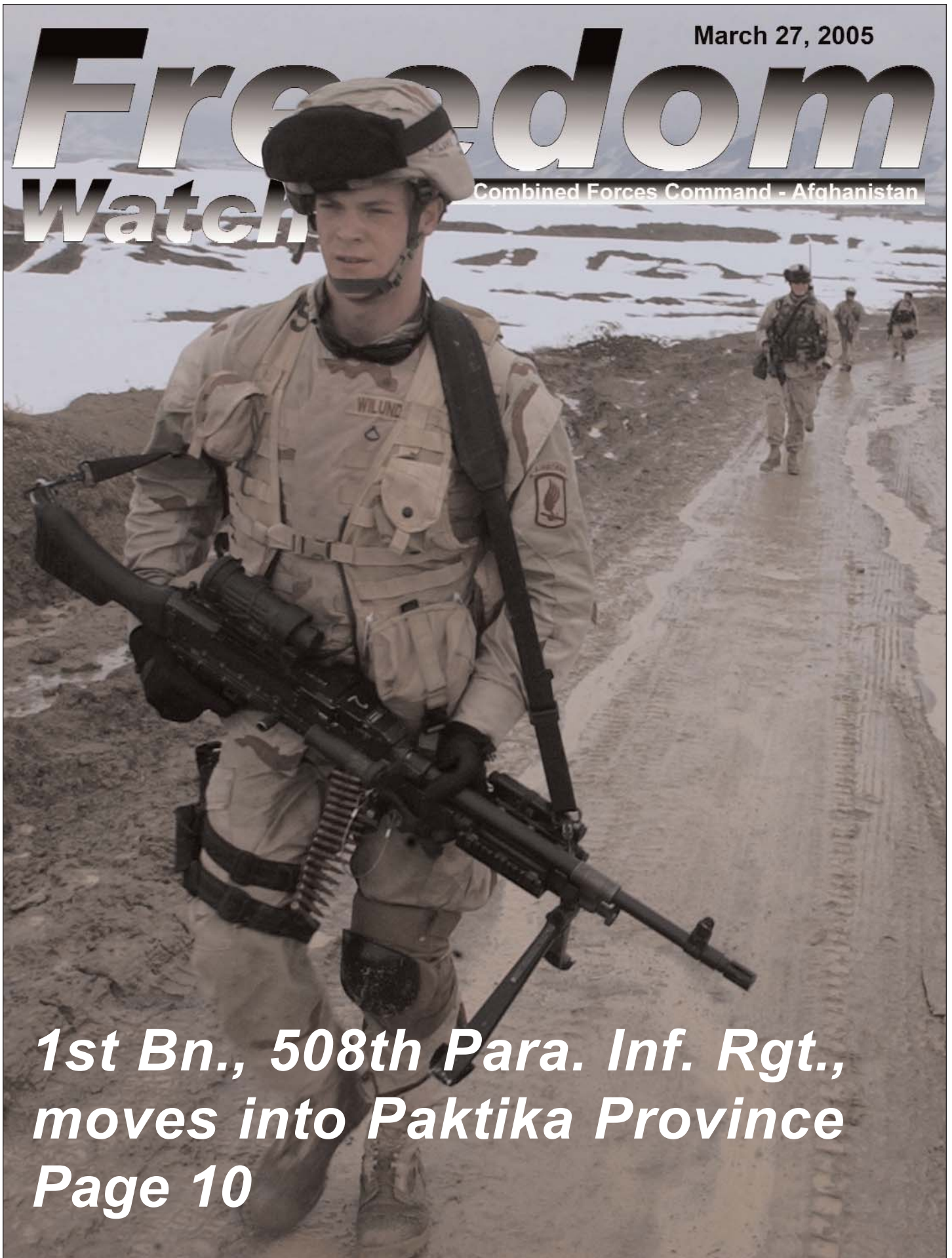


March 27, 2005

Freedom Watch

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan



***1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt.,
moves into Paktika Province
Page 10***



Air Force Capt. Catie Hague

Making history

An A-10 Thunderbolt II, tail number 78-697, touches down at Bagram Airfield March 8, becoming the first Warthog from Pope Air Force Base, N.C., to reach over 10,000 flying hours. Flown by Air Force Col. Warren Henderson, the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group commander and commander of Pope's 23rd Fighter Group, this milestone was achieved during a five-hour combat sortie.

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Pfc. Andrew Wilund, Company B, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, participates in his first dismounted patrol in Paktika Province. Wilund embarked on the patrol only two days after arriving at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E, where his unit replaced the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, in eastern Afghanistan.

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Freedom Watch

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CFC-A Commander – Lt. Gen. David Barno
Public Affairs Officer – Col. Tom R. MacKenzie

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SETAF assumes authority of CJTF-76

March 15 ceremony marks transfer from 25th ID (L)

Story by Spc. Chris Stump
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — In an aircraft hangar in the one-time Taliban stronghold of Bagram Airfield, command of Combined Joint Task Force-76 changed hands from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) to the Southern European Task Force during a transfer of authority ceremony March 15.

The 25th ID (L) commander, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, concluded his 11-month command by relinquishing authority of CJTF-76 to SETAF's commander, Maj. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya.

Kamiya now leads the largest operational command in Afghanistan, in charge of numerous Coalition task forces, ranging from infantry battalions to provincial reconstruction teams. It is a total force of more than 18,000 uniformed men and women, and civilians.

"Spectacular. That is the only word I can think of that describes the great success during this last year of the terrific troopers of Combined Joint Task Force-76," said Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan Commander Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, who was also present when Olson assumed command of CJTF-76 last April.

Some of those successes were the addition of 15 PRTs since Olson took command of operations, as well as more than \$40 million spent on relief and aid packages to ensure Afghanistan had what it took to effectively rebuild.

The Coalition members under CJTF-76 also greatly improved relations with the people of Afghanistan who, just over three years ago, were oppressed by the Taliban, said Barno.

Working side-by-side with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, the Coalition saw more than eight million Afghans go to the polls to cast their first ballots.

"CJTF-76's Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians reached out to every corner of this nation and touched the Afghan people, and offered a helping hand in their transition



Photos by Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau

Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan Commander Lt. Gen. David W. Barno passes the colors of CJTF-76 to Maj. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya, who assumed command of the task force from Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson during a transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Airfield March 15.

to democracy and freedom," said Barno. "Their impact will be felt for years to come."

CJTF-76's accomplishments are something Olson said he was proud to be a part of.

"I have never felt that contributions that I have made as a leader in the United States Army were ever more important than what I have been able to do with (the Coalition) here in Afghanistan over the course of the past year," said Olson.

"It has been an absolute honor to be able to serve, to get this opportunity to serve," he said.

During the ceremony, Kamiya pledged to continue with CJTF-76's successful mission of reconstruction and security that led to the first Afghan presidential election and a rise in stability throughout the area of operations.

"It is a great privilege and honor for SETAF to be taking over this great, multi-functional, multi-dimensional, multi-national joint task force," said Kamiya. "It is SETAF's Number 1 hope and desire to build upon the traditions of success in which (Olson) and this great combined joint task force have worked so hard to build – a new era of peace and prosperity for this great nation."



Col. Patrick Stackpole (left), former CJTF-76 chief of staff, presents the task force during the transfer of authority ceremony.

Honored service: Wolfhounds receive awards

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan — With their tour in Operation Enduring Freedom drawing to a close, the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, took the time to recognize individual achievement with awards ceremonies Feb. 25.

The ceremonies at Forward Operating Bases Sharana, Waza Khwa and Orgun-E represented the constant operations conducted by the Wolfhounds throughout Paktika Province, said former Combined Joint Task Force-76 Commander Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson.

Olson was on hand for each of the ceremonies to present awards to the Soldiers — an opportunity he called an honor.

“The Wolfhounds were the first on the ground for the 25th Infantry Division,” said Olson. “It was the Wolfhounds who set the tone for the rest of the division.”

He said award ceremonies like these recognize the individuals who made the entire operation successful.

“You were the guys making it happen,” said Olson. “The (privates) and the sergeants made the elections a reality. You are the ones that I’m extremely proud of.”

At Sharana, Olson awarded Bronze Star and Army Commendation medals to members of Headquarters and



Spc. Nathan Adams, Company B, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., is awarded the Army Commendation Medal.

Headquarters Company and Company B.

Achievements revolved around the work put into establishing a new FOB, assisting the developing government and providing security for the presidential election.

With the Wolfhounds on hand during a pivotal time in Afghanistan’s history, their awards represent the success of not only the unit, but also the local government, said 1st Lt. Stephen Holmberg, a Bronze Star Medal recipient from Company B.

“The security we provided during the elections created a safe environment for the elections to take place,” he said.

Although there were many achievements across the Wolfhound’s organiza-

tion, Company B Infantryman Spc. Nathan Adams said his award was especially meaningful because it represented team achievement more than individual effort.

“This award makes me feel good because me and my whole squad got through the rotation,” said Adams. “We couldn’t have done it without each other.”

Just as special as getting the award was the rotation ending on such a positive note, he said.

In all, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., awarded 96 Bronze Star Medals, 448 Army Commendation Medals and one Legion of Merit.



Sgt. 1st Class Curt Cornelison, HHC, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., receives a Bronze Star Medal from Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, former commander of Combined Joint Task Force-76.

Brothers serve together in CJTF Phoenix

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Scott A. Ham
Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix

CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan — Three years ago, Nathan Rogier was sitting at his home in Tell City, Ind., the day after graduating from high school, with aspirations of bigger and better things ahead. A visit by an Army recruiter to talk to his younger brother, Aaron, changed the course of his dreams.

Little did Nathan know that by sitting and listening to the conversation the two had, his interest would be piqued and he would find himself serving in the military alongside his brother in Afghanistan.

Spcs. Aaron and Nathan Rogier are serving with Company C, 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment, in the Indiana National Guard's 76th Separate Infantry Brigade. They are deployed to Afghanistan as part of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, which is responsible for training the Afghan National Army.

They live near Tell City with their parents, Jim and Myrna, and younger brother, Christopher. Last summer, they were activated and began to train for their deployment. As they joined a new mortar platoon, there was some apprehension about having two brothers in the same platoon going into a combat area. Their leaders quickly put the Rogiers in separate squads to reduce the risk of losing both,



Sgt. Joe McFarren

Spcs. Nathan (left) and Aaron Rogier both joined the Army and are serving at Camp Phoenix in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

should an attack occur.

But that wasn't the only adjustment they had to make. There were also the name games to get used to.

"The second 'r' is silent. It's pronounced Rogee not Rogier," Aaron told his new platoon.

They have heard everything from "Rogier times two," "Rogier in stereo" and, the all too familiar, "Are you twins?"

Nathan is the older of the two, which is ironic because it was Aaron who initiated the visit with the recruiter that would

change their futures forever.

Their parents thought it would be good for their young sons to experience the military, as many in their family had in the past. Soon the young Soldiers found themselves attending National Guard drills, and then it was off to basic training.

And before long, they found themselves in Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005 supporting the Global War on Terrorism.

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Enduring Voices

Why do you feel sacrifices made for OEF are important?



Sgt. Anthony Myers

TF 168

"We're doing things here to really benefit the people and have a positive impact on this country."



Pvt. Rick McGlade

TF 168

"To help the Afghan people enjoy the same kinds of freedoms that we have in the United States."



Col. Todd Nehls

CJTF Phoenix

"It will ensure the long-term stability of the region and protect the soil of the United States from terrorism."



Marine Cpl. William Mitchell

Co. K, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines

"Our sacrifices will ensure that the Afghan people have a better quality of life."



Local government bid farewell to Wolfhounds

Infantrymen honored during ceremony in Paktika Province

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan — Over the past year, the “Wolfhounds” of 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, formed tight bonds with their brothers in arms, an expected side effect of operating in a combat zone for 12 months.

Somewhat unexpected, however, is the close friendship gained from working closely with the local government of Paktika Province and the Afghans in the area.

To honor this special relationship, the Wolfhounds and the provincial leaders held a ceremony before the Soldiers made their journey back to Hawaii.

During the ceremony, both 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., and Afghan officials spoke and were recognized for their achievements.

On hand from the provincial government were Governor Haji Mohammed Glilab Mengal and Afghan National Police Gen. Rahime, head of the province’s police force.

With Coalition assistance, security dramatically changed within the province, said Rahime, who took the job as police chief early in the Wolfhounds’ rotation.

“When I first took over in my job, there were only a few police,” he said. “Now there are more than 400.”

The partnership between the Coalition and Afghans provides the motivation for many who work for him to continue to risk their lives to maintain stability, he said.

Although Paktika Province’s successes were mentioned throughout the ceremony, it was the strong relationship between the Wolfhounds and their Afghan friends that stood out.

One of the event’s highlights was the presentation of the



Left: Paktika Province Governor Haji Mohammed Glilab Mengal pins a Bronze Star Medal on Capt. John R. Sego, the commander of Co. C., 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., during a farewell ceremony held on Forward Operating Base Orgun-E.

Above: Mengal presents an award to Yusuf, a mission interpreter for 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt. Both American and Afghan Coalition members received awards for their service in Paktika Province.

Bronze Star Medal to Company B Commander Capt. John R. Sego by Mengal.

Although it was unusual to receive an award from a civilian, Sego said it was a great honor to have the governor pin the award on his chest.

“It was fitting,” said Sego. “What I liked about getting the award from the governor was that it is representative of the bond and friendship that developed from the year.

“Our personalities just clicked,” he said. “Our relationship definitely helped us get more accomplished.”

Daily interaction with his Afghan partners added greatly to the mission, said Sego.

“I will definitely miss them,” he said. “Working with (the Afghans) was a major part of our operation here.”

Both parties offered gestures of goodwill through various gift exchanges throughout the ceremony.

Coalition members and Afghans who died over the past year were remembered and the ceremony concluded with a 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps.

Coalition observes International Women's Day

Service members deliver supplies to returnees in Kabul

Story and photo by
Sgt. 1st Class Darren D. Heusel
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan — Approximately 40 members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan and the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan got a head start on International Women's Day on March 4 by delivering much-needed supplies to more than 300 returnees camped at the old Russian Agricultural Building in Demazhang on the outskirts of Kabul.

While International Women's Day wasn't officially celebrated in Afghanistan until March 8, members of the U.S.-led Coalition wanted to hold an early celebration for members of the Afghan Women's Union and their families, said Maria Or, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan.

"Among the women who were honored were ladies who have worked at the Afghan National Army Military Academy Corps' construction site," said Or. "Hajera, one of the Afghan Women's Union representatives and a former Corps employee, asked us to bring gifts and donations in celebration of the cause."

Elizabeth Carver, the Corps' resident engineer for the ANA Military Academy,



Afghan women and children wait while gifts are distributed as part of International Women's Day on March 4 on the outskirts of Kabul.

thought it would be a good idea to show their appreciation for the dozen or so women who worked for the Corps' contractor from January to February and to bolster the confidence for all women in Afghanistan.

U.S. Navy Chaplain (Capt.) Tierian Cash, command chaplain for CFC-A, was able to provide the volunteers with clothing and toys to bring as gifts, said Or. Carver also collected several hundred dollars to pay for plates for refreshments, as well as cooking oil and two commercial buses to transport many of the returnee women to Demazhang.

"The night before the event, at least half a dozen Corps employees got together to package more than 300 individually packaged and pre-sorted gifts to hand out," said Or.

Both men and women were invited to join in the celebration and the men were especially encouraged to participate so they could show their support for the women, as "their contributions are vital to the economic and social success of this country," said Or.

"It's good to hear and see that the

See *Women*, Page 15

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Infantrymen of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 27 Infantry Regiment, drop a 120 mm mortar round during a live-fire training exercise held on Forward Operating Base Orgun-E in eastern Afghanistan. The training is conducted each month to ensure the accuracy of the weapon, which is used for force protection.

*Photo by Spc. Mark Himmelburger
Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt.*

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



Afghan National Army receives 50 new trucks

Story and photos by

Master Sgt. D. Keith Johnson

Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — Balloons were tied to new trucks aligned in an L-shape, ready to be driven away. But salesmen weren't haggling with customers trying to make deals.

Instead, the government of India turned over the keys to 50 four-and-a-half-ton trucks it donated to Afghanistan in a ceremony held at the Afghan National Army's 1st Brigade, 201st Corps, motor pool at the Presidential Palace in Kabul.

The new trucks were the latest installment of vehicles donated by the Indian government to assist in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

The keys to all of the trucks were symbolically turned over from India's foreign minister, Natwar Singh, to Abdul Rahim Wardak, Afghanistan's minister of defense.

"The successes of the Afghan National Army could not have been possible without the help and cooperation of many nations," said Wardak. "Today we are seeing a very good example of such cooperation from a country with which Afghanistan enjoys historic and very deep-rooted ties of friendship and cooperation."

To conclude the ceremony, Baz Mohammed Jawhari of the Afghan Ministry of Defense, Indian Defense Attaché Gen. Nair Balakrishnah and Col. Len Shartzler from the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan signed the transfer documents.

The delivery brings the total to 285 vehicles out of a pledged 300. Fifteen ambulances are scheduled for delivery in the next few months to complete the donation.

"India has been an excellent partner, providing support to Afghanistan and these efforts are very much appreciated," said Lt. Col. David Braxton, director of logistics operations at OMC-A, and the facilitator of the ceremony.

At the Bonn Agreement in March 2002, governments were asked to

support the rebuilding of Afghanistan. The government of India agreed to support Afghanistan by donating the 300 vehicles. The deliveries began in June 2003. In addition to the 50 trucks donated at the ceremony, India has already delivered 100 two-and-a-half-ton trucks, 120 jeeps and 15 ambulances.

The vehicles, produced by various Indian vehicle manufacturers, are all new, although they are slightly different from their Indian counterparts. The donated vehicles all have the steering wheels on the left-hand side. Indian vehicles, as part of the British influence from years past, are usually driven from the right-hand side.

International donations are important to the future of Afghanistan, and of the Afghan National Army, a point not lost on Wardak.

"It has been a very generous gesture



The keys to the trucks donated by the government of India were symbolically turned over from India's foreign minister, Natwar Singh (left), to Abdul Rahim Wardak, Afghanistan's minister of defense, at a donation ceremony.

and a good example of regional cooperation," concluded Wardak. "We are looking forward to further cooperation with the friendly government of India."



New four-and-a-half-ton trucks are aligned for the donation ceremony in the motor pool at the Afghan presidential palace.

Trading Places

325th CSH says farewell, 249th CSH takes over

Story and photos by
Spc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — As the year-long deployment for the Soldiers of the 325th Combat Support Hospital came to a close, the service members reflected on the hard work they put into the thousands of Coalition forces and Afghan citizens they treated.

The main hospital is located at Bagram Airfield with the primary mission of treating sick or injured service members and civilians, but the medical staff also treated Afghans throughout the country with life-threatening injuries or health concerns.

Over the past year, the service members assigned to the 325th CSH treated more than 34,000 patients at their medical facilities and during cooperative medical assistance missions, and performed more than 1,700 surgeries.

"We have treated a lot of patients that could have died or been permanently injured if they hadn't received the treatment we provided," said Master Sgt. Terri Bly, 325th CSH nurse. "Knowing that we have made a difference in so many lives makes this year very rewarding."

Included in the total number of patients



Master Sgt. Terri Bly of the 325th CSH listens to an Afghan woman's breathing during a cooperative medical assistance mission in Ghazni Province.

are more than 9,000 Afghans.

"We have treated everything from burns to landmine injuries," said Lt. Col. Billie Wisdom, the 325th's deputy commander. "It makes the staff feel good to know that they have been able to help so many people."

Being in a position to change the lives of those around you is something the medical staff of the 325th took very seriously.

"We do our best to improve the lives of every patient we treat," said Bly. "During this deployment, I feel we have done just that. We have made a difference in the lives of both service members and Afghans alike."

With the change of command ceremony March 11, the hospital officially became the 249th Combat Support Hospital and Task Force Strength, which is comprised of service members from close to two dozen locations across the United States.

"Even though the change of command (ceremony) wasn't until the 11th of March, we started providing care and taking over the mission at the end of February," said Col. John Giddens, the Task Force Strength and 249th CSH commander.

Stepping up and taking over for another unit can be difficult, but the 249th CSH was ready for the task at hand and jumped in head first.

"As of March 9, the medical staff had already treated close to 800 patients and conducted two dozen surgeries," said Staff Sgt. Josalette Husband, 249th CSH clinical operations noncommissioned officer in charge.

With the mission moving at full speed, the service members of the 325th CSH diligently trained with the members of the

249th throughout the transfer of authority process.

For more than a week, the Soldiers of the 325th spent much of their time left in the hospital training the incoming unit.

"The right-seat, left-seat was a lot different from what I expected it to be like," said Husband. "Instead of watching how they did their job to get the mission accomplished, we did the work and got hands-on experience from the start. I really liked it. I feel like I learned more than I would have otherwise."

With the cross-training complete, the 249th is now ready to add to the list of their predecessor's accomplishments in Afghanistan.

"Our goal is to continue the work that was done by the 325th," said Husband, "as well as add a few accomplishments of our own."

One such achievement the 249th is looking forward to maintaining is their rapport with a local hospital in Kabul for Afghan patients.

"Part of our mission here is to build up the local medical infrastructure," said Sgt. 1st Class George Jones, 249th CSH night shift battle captain. "In order to do so, we are looking at working with a local hospital and having some of the patients transferred to the (local medical) facility once their condition has stabilized."

While the medical staff has many goals for their time here, they know they still have their primary mission to accomplish, said Jones.

"Caring for people is what we do," he said. "If we don't focus on the most important things first, saving people's lives, then none of the additional goals we have set will ever be attained."



2nd Lt. Julie Sheets, 325th CSH, examines an Afghan woman's eyes during a CMA in Bamian Province. Providing assistance through CMAs is one way the 325th CSH medical staff assisted Afghan people in remote areas.

'Red Devils' assume combat role in Paktika

Italy-based unit takes responsibility from Woflhounds

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan — After months of preparation in Italy, and days of travel, the "Red Devils" of 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, hit the ground running at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E earlier this month.

They quickly assumed their mission of conducting security operations in eastern Afghanistan's Paktika Province.

Their participation in Operation Enduring Freedom comes little more than a year after the unit completed a 12-month rotation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Drawing from their recent experience, members of the unit wasted no time settling into their mission at FOB Orgun-E.

After getting essential information from their predecessors, the "Woflhounds" of 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, from the 25th Infantry Division (Light), the unit visited the range and embarked on a joint patrol — some within 48 hours of arrival.

"It was our focus to hit the ground running when we arrived here," said Capt. Josh Segraves, commander of Company B, 1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt. "It is important, because the sooner we



Spc. Chet Ames, a Co. B, 1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt., infantryman, participated in his first dismounted patrol in Paktika Province. Ames embarked on the patrol four days after arriving at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E.

get involved in the mission, the sooner we can get proficient at it."

There are many important aspects to beginning as soon as possible.

"Our time with the Woflhounds is very limited," said Segraves. "We are trying hard to focus on the success of (2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt.) and their accomplishments."

Segraves said he encouraged his Soldiers to interact with their predecessors on every level.

"I want them to spend as much time as possible with them to pick up on all the aspects of our mission here," he said.

Aside from the emphasis on learning from the outgoing unit, the focus for the 1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt., revolves around personnel and equipment readiness.

"We want to get into the routine of pre-combat inspections and other aspects of the battle rhythm as soon as possible," said Sgt. Christopher Johnson, a team leader with Co. B.

Johnson, a veteran

of OIF, said that during the first couple of weeks he is focusing on the members of his unit who weren't in Iraq.

"I just want them to get the jitters out as soon as possible, so it will be easier for them to focus on the mission," he said.

Even though a majority of the unit has past experience operating in a combat zone, Johnson said he is approaching this mission with a fresh approach.

"I know this is a different mission here," he said.

After interacting with the outgoing unit and embarking on one patrol, he has already seen differences in the landscape and mission.

"The terrain is much more sparse and spread out than Iraq," he said. "I can also see much more of a focus on (civil affairs) with this mission."

One of Johnson's Soldiers is embracing the "hitting the ground running" mentality with open arms.

"The more I see, the better I know how things are going to be here," said Pfc. Nathan Fuller. "I want to be out as much as possible right now."

In the next few weeks, a majority of the unit will push further into the province on extended patrols, and some will make outlying FOBs their homes.

"It's nice to finally be here," said Fuller. "I hope we stay this busy the entire year."



Staff Sgt. John Stick points out targets for Pfc. Insaaf Hosein during their first visit to the range at FOB Orgun-E. Both are with Co. B, 1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt.

Gardez PRT Soldier organizes donations

Civil affairs sergeant sorts, delivers humanitarian aid items

Story and photo by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

GARDEZ PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — Rows of shoes stand at attention next to neat stacks of T-shirts and sweaters folded dress-right-dress. These items have all passed Sgt. Rena' Brownridge's inspection.

Brownridge, a civil affairs Soldier with the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team's Civil Affairs Team — Alpha, is in charge of sorting all of the boxes of humanitarian aid sent to the PRT.

"I saw all the boxes just kind of sitting around and that was kinda it," said Brownridge. "I rolled up my sleeves and got busy."

Surrounded by mountains of shoes, clothing and toys, Brownridge methodically works her way through the piles, sorting items by size, color and even season.

"It's amazing some of the stuff we get. A lot of it is brand new or close to it," she said, smiling as she held a tiny red corduroy jumper at eye level. "A lot of the children here don't get toys. They're like little adults. It's hard for them to be children when they're already out working, supporting their families. Even if it's just a Beanie Baby or a box of crayons, I think it gives them a piece of their childhood back."

Once all of the items are sorted and re-boxed, it's time to distribute them during the PRT's weekly humanitarian aid missions.

Brownridge and her team travel to area villages to distribute the boxes of shoes, clothes and toys.

"We don't just go out and drop off boxes. We physically go out and give it to the people ourselves because we want to make sure that it actually gets to them," she said. "We also want to put a human face on our presence here. Some of

these people have never seen an American Soldier up close and they don't know what to expect. It's important that we show them that we're people too and we're here to help them, no strings attached."

Team members literally help to "fit" each person with shoes and clothing, from children to adults. This is where Brownridge's efforts really pay off.

"It saves us a lot of time, because we already know what we have before we go out," said Staff Sgt. David Philbeck, the Gardez PRT Civil Military Operations Center noncommissioned officer in charge. "We can line everyone up and get started. There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes."

"She really does a good job with it," said Staff Sgt. Mark Matteson, Gardez PRT commo chief.

Matteson knows firsthand the importance of organization. He started a "Shoes for Kids" program at the PRT. As a result, he's received hundreds of pairs of donated shoes from the United States for distribution in Afghanistan.

"It's a good feeling to be able to help, to contribute, and it's even better when you know that Soldiers like (Brownridge) and her team are going to make sure that these things get to the people who really need them."

This is Brownridge's second major deployment. She deployed to Iraq in 2003.

"I didn't really do any humanitarian aid there ... it was too dangerous," said Brownridge. "I mainly worked with the contractors and I did a lot of paperwork. For me, being here is completely different than when I was in Iraq. Here I have more direct contact with the people. I can see my efforts firsthand."



Sgt. Rena' Brownridge, a civil affairs sergeant with Civil Affairs Team – Alpha at the Gardez PRT, sorts a pile of shoes recently sent to the PRT.

The majority of the donations received at the Gardez PRT come from individuals, businesses and churches in the United States. Several items have also come from the PRT Soldiers themselves.

"I think I have the best job in the Army," said Brownridge. "I get to immerse myself in the culture and in the people. I've met so many women and children and I've seen a lot of smiling faces."

Coalition celebrates Women's Day with Paktia Afghans

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

PAKTIA PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Education, political involvement and better healthcare. These were the major issues addressed among Afghan women in Gardez during International Women's Day.

The daylong celebration brought together women and girls of all ages who came dressed in colorful scarves, elaborate jewelry and their finest traditional clothing.

Local leaders, educators, physicians and recently appointed Paktia Governor Hakim Khan Taniwal took turns speaking to the large crowd gathered inside the Gardez municipal building.

Leaders spoke of improving conditions for Afghan women, and ending gender discrimination. Some ideas presented were integrating women into the local police department and encouraging them to run for political offices in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Nearly half of the women in Paktia Province voted in last year's presidential election.

"We are happy to come together to celebrate our sisterhood, our progress," said the Afghan Women's Educational Center leader, Mahira Ahmadzai. "We are able to use our voices and our skills to improve our lives."

AWEC provides women with access and information on everything from literacy programs to healthcare services, particularly reproductive health.

Representatives from the United Nations also spoke.

The UN officially began observing



Above: Hali Ma Khazan, a local educator, presents Paktia Province Governor Hakim Khan Taniwal and Chief of Human Rights Bidar Rafiullah with a gift of appreciation during the International Women's Day Celebration in Paktia Province on March 8.

Right: A young woman takes a picture of Taniwal during his speech to the audience.

International Women's Day on March 8, 1975.

"International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made and to call for change," said Benedetta Odorisio, a human rights officer for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

"The United Nations strongly supports any initiative aiming at or promoting and supporting women's rights. It is a pleasure to see so many women here today ... united against discrimination, against injustice."

Soldiers from the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team also attended the celebration.

"I think it's important that we as members of the Coalition show our support," said 1st Lt. Jim Avrams, the operations officer and force protection officer in charge for the Gardez PRT.

"This is a huge holiday for them. It's also a huge step — they have the freedom to come together and celebrate," he said.

Just a few years ago, something like this wouldn't have been possible.

"I think it's important for the women here to know that we recognize and support their



efforts," said Civil Affairs Sgt. Rena' Brownridge, a member of the Civil Affairs Team — Alpha at the Gardez PRT. "They're experiencing a whole new world, for the first time being able to work outside their homes and go to school."

Brownridge is currently working with AWEC members on a sewing project for the hospital in Gardez. The project will employ over a hundred women for at least two months, sewing linen for hospital beds.

In addition to the speeches, local women and girls performed a comedy skit, sang, and participated in a trivia game with questions about women in Afghan history.

International Women's Day celebrations took place throughout several provinces in Afghanistan and around the world in countries like China, South Africa and Australia.

The United Nations in New York also observed the day with a panel discussion on gender equality.

"We as women need to encourage each other, no matter what our race or nationality is," said Brownridge. "Seeing them up there and being able to take part in their celebration was powerful. I'm very proud of all of them. This shows that they're choosing to excel despite their circumstances."



Sgt. Rena' Brownridge, a civil affairs sergeant with Civil Affairs Team — Alpha at the Gardez PRT, enjoys a cup of chai with a local woman during the celebration in Paktia Province March 8.

Preventive measures ensure good health

Safeguarding the Coalition

Story by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — As many troops throughout the country redeploy to their home stations, medical personnel here want to ensure their transition from a combat zone to a garrison environment is a healthy one.

For many, the countdown has already begun. Long-awaited reunions, numerous re-integration briefings and a return to everyday life are dominating their thoughts. Being in the best possible health can help returning service members fully enjoy their redeployment, as well as handle all of the stress that can accompany it.

Medical personnel said the most common ailments troops here have complained of are diarrhea, upper respiratory infections, minor dental problems and colds.

"People live in such close quarters, it's easy to spread germs and viruses," said Sgt. Tracy Rawson, Joint Task Force Wings Aid Station noncommissioned officer in charge. "Not eating properly, not getting enough sleep, can all weaken your immune system."

Fortunately, the majority of troops serving here have remained combat ready by taking the necessary steps toward staying healthy.

"I took my meds, washed my hands, kept things clean and dressed appropriately," said Sgt. 1st Class Charles Boyd, a personnel NCO. This was Boyd's first deployment and he also credits a consistent physical training program with keeping himself and his Soldiers healthy.

"We had a PT plan in place here," said Boyd. "I think that was the big factor in keeping us physically and mentally healthy. Now that we're preparing to redeploy, we're going to continue to do the same things as we did from Day 1 — exer-

cising and taking our malaria pills."

That's good news to medical personnel like Maj. Richard Ares, Combined Joint Task Force-76 deputy surgeon and preventive medicine officer, who also endorses a regular exercise program.

"PT has several benefits, from boosting your immune system to relieving stress," he said.

Ares and his network of task force medical staff, including preventive and veterinary medicine Soldiers, worked together throughout this deployment to keep troops here healthy.

"What we've tried to do is forward position our public healthcare system here," said Ares. "It's a combined effort to ensure Soldiers are protected now and in the future."



Spc. Cheryl Ransford

Staff Sgt. Dan Collier, 1163rd Area Support Medical Co., discusses a prescription with Air Force Airman 1st Class Amber Stevens, 416th Air Expeditionary Group, at the Karshi-Khanabad hospital. Taking care of one's health through preventive measures and utilizing medical facilities contributes to a healthy deployment and redeployment.

He recommends service members continue washing their hands frequently, drinking plenty of water, eating properly and from approved food sources only, keeping their living and working areas clean, and staying away from animals.

However, the most important thing for those individuals redeploying soon is to continue to take their malaria medications. In addition to their dose of daily doxycycline or weekly mefloquine, troops will also receive a second medication called primaquine once they return. Primaquine, taken in combination with doxycycline or mefloquine, flushes any traces of the malaria parasite from the body. Alcohol consumption should be limited while tak-

ing malaria medications and completely avoided once individuals start taking the primaquine.

In addition to keeping redeploying troops physically healthy, healthcare providers are also paying special attention to their mental health.

"This deployment has affected different individuals in different ways," said Air Force Dr. (Capt.) Jennifer McClure, a 355th Medical Operations Squadron psychologist. "Increased stress levels, long hours, frustrations at work and separation from loved ones are all significant factors that can effect mental health."

McClure works at the Combat Stress Control Clinic at Bagram Airfield. She says a majority of the issues service members have are marital or family problems.

"If there were existing problems, don't expect everything to be fixed as soon as you return home," said McClure.

Troops may also experience feelings of anxiety, excitement and nervousness about returning home, all of which are normal. She recommends troops continue to communicate with loved ones and share their experiences with them once they return.

"With all change comes chaos ... there's no time table for readjustments," said McClure. "Each person is different. There are mental health services available here for service members to use before they leave and once they arrive home."

Before redeploying, troops will receive a post-deployment health assessment and medical threat briefing. The military uses the information gathered from the assessment to record and track health issues and concerns of deployed troops serving in combat zones.

Once they reach their home stations or mobilization sites, service members will process through deployment cycle support. There, on-site medical personnel will do everything from administering tuberculosis and HIV tests to updating immunizations.

"We've had a pretty good track record for keeping our forces healthy here," said Ares, "and we want to keep it that way."

Chaplains support deployed troops

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

GARDEZ PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — Throughout the military's history, the chaplain has stood as a symbol of comfort and peace during both combat and peacetime operations.

For troops serving here and in Iraq, the military chaplain's role has taken on an even greater importance. But for those serving in remote areas of Afghanistan, access to a chaplain can be limited.

Fortunately, many unit chaplains like Chaplain (1st Lt.) Scott Hagen, 367th Engineer Battalion, are taking turns rotating to these areas to provide religious support.

"I think the spiritual life of a Soldier is very important," said Hagen. "It's easy to get discouraged out here. It's easy to forget your foundation when things are not going well or there are problems at home."

Hagen is stationed on Bagram Airfield but said he tries to see the Soldiers in Gardez at least once every two weeks to minister to and counsel them.

"It's nice to have him here," said Marine Lance Cpl. Lucino Contreras, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. "They come in and check on us, ask us how we're doing." Contreras credits his religious faith with helping him get through his deployment.



Hagen prepares to go out on a mission with Soldiers from the Gardez PRT.



Chaplain (1st Lt.) Scott Hagen, 367th Eng. Bn., and Sgt. Jesse Dicus, the Police Tactical Advisory Team noncommissioned officer in charge with the 551st MP Co., 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), talk at the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team before they head out on a mission March 7.

"I think the visits boost morale, and it makes the guys feel comfortable," said Spc. Leo Pins, Task Force 168. "Little things like seeing if we need anything or just coming by to say hello. It makes a difference. Especially if you're having a bad day or things are crazy at home."

Pins is also a member of the unit ministry team here. The team conducts informal religious services and provides religious support in the absence of a chaplain.

Sometimes more than one chaplain can be seen rotating into a location at one time to provide religious support to troops.

"I think it's good to have more than one out here visiting. I like to work in teams," said Navy Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Paul Evers, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines. "We all have a good relationship and we work well together. I think it's extremely important to have chaplains from different branches, different faiths coming out. A chaplain is a universal sign of life and humanity."

Evers is stationed at Forward Operating Base Salerno and travels to the provincial reconstruction teams in Asadabad and Jalalabad. He too believes in the importance of faith for troops in combat.

"Having faith, especially in the fox hole, is essential," said Evers. "It's the underlying support for everything that we do. Faith can diminish fear."

For service members who do not identi-

fy with any particular faith or religion, unit chaplains encourage them to still take advantage of their services. "We're not here to force anything on anyone," said Hagen. "I'm here to provide a listening ear, to be a source of support and a morale booster."

"Our door is always open to everyone, regardless of faith, rank or beliefs," said Evers.

"We're all unique, all special, every color, creed, faith. And the military has done a lot to help foster that idea."

In addition to conducting religious services, military chaplains can also pass on Red Cross messages and conduct confidential counseling for troops having personal problems and who want to speak to someone not in their chain of command.



Marine Lance Cpls. Seth McGargle (left) and Lucino Contreras, both of Co. K, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines, participate in a bible study session at the Gardez PRT.

Brothers: Indiana brothers deploy together to Afghanistan

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"Our family, friends and church are very supportive with packages, e-mails, letters and cards," said Nathan. "Perry County has one of the best Family Readiness Groups and supports its troops big time."

While they are on the same base camp, they have been tasked with different jobs as part of the security force.

Despite their separation on missions,

Nathan said, it is great they got to deploy together.

"We can watch over each other, and it's good for our morale," he said. "Our parents are very understanding and I think it's better (to both be deployed) than just one of us here."

"At first it was rough. However, the experience and pride I have gotten from this is enormous," said Nathan. "The military has made us stronger people, men-

tally and physically. You can overcome leaps and bounds you never thought possible. Aaron makes this mission a lot easier being here, but being the older brother, I constantly worry about his safety."

"We are sharing a part of life together that most would never dream of doing," he said. "It's cool that we can deploy to a combat zone and still live in the same hut together to accomplish this mission for (the people of Afghanistan)."

Women: International Women's Day recognized in Kabul

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women here in Afghanistan have the freedom to celebrate Women's Day, especially the women who live in the (returnee) camps," said Carver. "I wanted to show my support that they are not alone in this occasion, and that I am on their side."

"The effort of these women shows to the world that they can get a job anywhere in Afghanistan. These gifts will also show these women that we appreciate what they do," she said.

Hajera, who addressed the crowd before the supplies were distributed, praised Carver for what she has done to help employ Afghan women and for helping to

plan the humanitarian mission.

She said because of recent efforts by newly elected Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the U.S.-led Coalition, women now have more freedoms and independence.

"Supporting freedom and the right to live and work for all people is at the center of our mission here," said Col. John O'Dowd, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District. "Helping the women of Afghanistan in the plight for human rights and the freedom to work is essential for us to be successful."

"This and the fact that the women of Afghanistan are industrious and hard

working is why the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has tried to employ Afghan women whenever possible."

Having a military presence at the event showed the Coalition is concerned about everyone in Afghan society, not just the soldiers they are training to protect it, said Capt. Amy Weber of Wainwright, Alaska, the Corps' quality assurance representative at the Afghan National Army's training site in Darualaman.

"I thought this was a great way to recognize the women here," she said. "It not only helps men view women as unique and special in their own right, but it helps the women themselves develop their self image and realize who they really are."

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



What time is it?

Dari

Sa-at chand ast?

(Sah-ahst chand ahst)

Pashtu

So bajay da

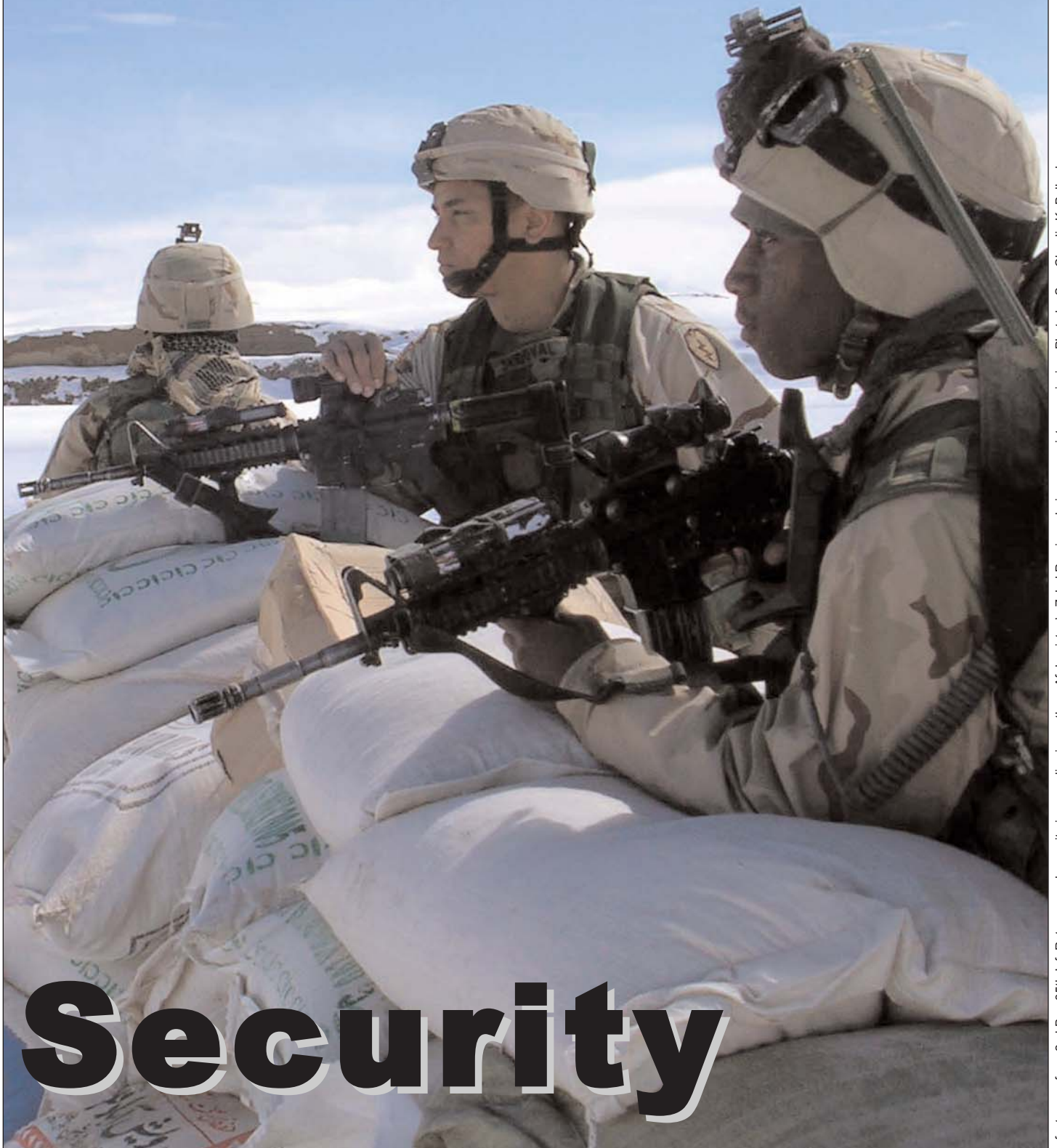
(So bahjay-dah)

Afghan cultural tidbit

Afghan music, once banned by the Taliban but readily available on tape in Afghan communities in the United States, is very popular. Both genders dance the atan, a national dance in which dancers with arms raised twist from side to side at the waist as they step in a slow, rhythmic pattern around a circle. It is danced in same-gender groups during weddings and other celebrations.

Freedom Watch

March 27, 2005



Infantrymen from 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., secure humanitarian supplies in southern Afghanistan's Zabul Province during an assistance mission. Photo by Spc. Claudia K. Bullard

Security